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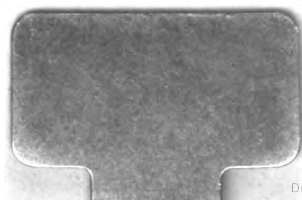




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# OFFICE

FOR THE

## VISITATION OF THE SICK,

ACCOMPANIED

WITH NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS.

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BY WILLIAM COXE, M.A.

ARCHDEACON OF WILTS.

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**F**EW words may suffice for an introduction to this little Tract. It was found among the manuscripts of the late Archdeacon COXE; in the class of religious and devotional compositions, which on various occasions, general and special, he produced in the exercise of his sacred profession. To his friends it will be endeared, when they are informed that the closing hours of his long, active, and beneficent life were occupied in preparing and revising it for the press.

It contains the Office for the Sick, with notes and explanations, founded on the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England; and is intended as a companion to two former Tracts, on the Church Catechism and Confirmation Service. It

avoids all abstruse points of divinity, which, in their discussion, are surely ill-timed in seasons of bodily affliction, or on the approach of death : and, whilst it suppresses the presumptions of enthusiasm on the one hand, and the forebodings of despondency on the other, and goes only to plain and practical questions of primary and vital interest, it will, it is hoped, both facilitate the labours of those who *visit* the sick, and be conducive to the best spiritual benefit of those who are *visited*.

*Twyford, Jan. 1. 1830.*

# THE ORDER

## FOR THE

### VISITATION OF THE SICK.

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#### PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

**M**ANY words are not wanting to prove the uncertainty of human life, and that all are alike subject to the stroke of death. The holy Psalmist informs us, that thousands fall at our right hand, and tens of thousands at our left; and that we are exposed to the pestilence that walketh in the darkness, and to the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day.

Death is, indeed, the lot of all. The rich are not protected for favour, nor the poor for pity; the old are not revered for their age, nor infants for their tenderness; and, whatever be our condition, we must all lie down equally in the dishonour of the grave, and dwell with worms and



creeping things, in a house of corruption and darkness. We ought, therefore, never to forget the impressive words of Holy Writ, that in the midst of life we are in death; and we should be always prepared to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Oh! that we were wise and understood this, and would consider our latter end!

Although we are far from attempting to limit the infinite mercy of God, and must allow, from many passages in Scripture, and particularly from the example of the penitent thief, that no period is too late for the exercise of his mercy, yet it is our duty to impress earnestly on the minds of all, the awful danger of trusting to a death-bed repentance, or of deferring to a future day that contrition and amendment which the forbearance of God ought to work daily in our souls. Whilst we are thus mocking our heavenly Father by resolutions which may never be realised, we should not forget that the sudden stroke of death may reach us unprepared;

or that pain and suffering may so far weaken our faculties, as to prevent us from working out our salvation by accomplishing those conditions which are required for the dispensation of his pardon. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of all Christians to consider their latter end, even in the full flow of health, and with the prospect of a long life; but it is still more imperious when we are visited by sickness, or are far advanced in age.

On these considerations one of the earliest apostolical injunctions was the visitation of the sick, not merely as a duty of friendship and courtesy, but as a religious obligation. Although the administration of comfort and consolation to our neighbours is incumbent on all, yet it is more particularly the duty of the minister to fulfil this important office, as well to soothe the anguish of mental suffering, as to prepare the mind of the sufferer for that awful change which awaits all mankind. Sick persons are, therefore, strongly recommended to send

for the minister, as soon as they are visited by illness, and not to wait until they are very weak and nigh unto death ; because in that situation they may, through pain and debility, be incapable of asking advice, or even of joining in prayer. When we are making preparation to humble ourselves before Almighty God, to confess our sins, and by unfeigned repentance seek forgiveness and the comfortable grace of his Holy Spirit, our minds ought to be sound, that we may not despair, or be too presumptuous in our hopes, or be subject to that peevishness and irritation which often accompany pain and sickness. Unfortunately, however, we are too apt to neglect this solemn duty in the enjoyment of health ; but in pain and sickness it comes home to every bosom. We then lament the folly and wickedness of not having considered our latter end ; we then feel the necessity of no longer delaying to make our peace with God by sincere repentance, and by imploring forgiveness for our sins through the atone-

ment and mediation of our blessed Saviour, and the comfortable assistance of the Holy Spirit.

After these observations, we proceed to explain the office, which our Church has so properly appointed for the visitation of the sick, and which is justly considered the most full and useful service, which is employed in any Church, on this occasion.



## THE ORDER FOR THE VISITATION OF THE SICK.

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¶ *When any person is sick, notice shall be given thereof to the Minister of the Parish; who, coming into the sick person's house, shall say,*

PEACE be to this house, and to all that dwell in it. (1)

¶ *When he cometh into the sick man's presence he shall say, kneeling down,*

REMEMBER not, Lord, our iniquities, nor the iniquities of our forefathers. (2) Spare

### EXPLANATION.

(1) *Peace be to this, &c.*] These are the words which Christ ordered his disciples to use, when he sent them to convert sinners, to preach repentance, and to heal the diseases both of their bodies and souls. St. Luke, chap. x. 5. It is a pious wish for the health and prosperity of all that dwell in the house; and Christ has promised, that if duly received, it shall procure a blessing.

(2) *Remember not, Lord, our, &c.*] It is natural to supplicate God not to remember our iniquities; and

us, good Lord; spare thy people, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us for ever.

*Answer.* Spare us, good Lord.

¶ *Then the Minister shall say,*

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

*Christ, have mercy upon us.*

Lord, have mercy upon us.

#### EXPLANATION.

we, at the same time, justly pray to him not to remember those of our fathers, because we are too apt to imitate them, and because we learn from the second commandment, that God will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. In this prayer we also earnestly offer our petitions to the Father of all goodness, that in his unbounded mercy *he will spare us*, because his blessed son Jesus Christ redeemed us with his precious blood, and not *be angry with us for ever*; or, in other words, to deliver us from his eternal wrath, to which we should all have been subject, without the redemption of mankind by our Lord Jesus Christ. We are told by the holy Psalmist, Psalm cxlv. 8, that "the Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy;" and again, "*He will not* always chide, neither will he keep his *anger for ever.*" Ps. ciii. 9.

OUR Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation ; But deliver us from evil. *Amen.* (3)

*Minister.* O Lord, save thy servant ;

*Answer.* Which putteth *his* trust in thee.

*Minister.* Send *him* help from thy holy place ;

*Answer.* And evermore mightily defend *him*.

*Minister.* Let the enemy have no advantage of *him* ;

#### EXPLANATION.

(3) *Our Father, &c.*] Nothing can be more properly introduced on this occasion than the Lord's Prayer, which our Church has adopted in several parts of the service, from the consideration that no form of petition to God can be so perfect as that delivered to mankind by our blessed Saviour himself.



*Answer.* Nor the wicked approach to hurt *him*.

*Minister.* Be unto *him*, O Lord, a strong tower.

*Answer.* From the face of *his* enemy.

*Minister.* O Lord, hear our prayers.

*Answer.* And let our cry come unto thee.

*Minister.*

O Lord, look down from heaven, behold, visit, and relieve this thy servant. Look upon *him* with the eyes of thy mercy, give *him* comfort and sure confidence in thee, defend *him* from the danger of the enemy (4), and keep *him* in perpetual

#### EXPLANATION.

(4) — *defend him from the danger of the enemy.*] This enemy is our spiritual enemy, the devil, who, as we are told in Scripture, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The Priest, therefore, requests our Almighty Father to defend the sick from this spiritual enemy; and we are told by St. James, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," chap. iv. 7. To his temptations we are peculiarly exposed on the bed of sickness, and in the last stage of our mortal existence. If we have lived wickedly, he may urge us to despair; if

peace and safety; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

HEAR US, Almighty and most merciful God and Saviour: extend thy accustomed goodness to this thy servant who is grieved with sickness. Sanctify, we beseech thee, this thy fatherly correction to *him*; that the sense of *his* weakness may add strength to *his* faith, and seriousness to *his* repentance; That, if it shall be thy good pleasure to restore *him* to *his* former health, *he* may lead the residue of *his* life in thy fear, and to thy

#### EXPLANATION.

piously, to presumption; if we are in pain, to impatience; if doubtful, to unbelief; if worldly-minded, to unwillingness to die; if secure, to defer repentance, which may be attended with the utmost danger to our souls. We therefore pray God to preserve the sick from falling into such temptations; to make them firmly to rely on his mercy for forgiveness; to bear patiently their chastisements; to submit to his will; to be willing to die, if it be his good pleasure; and diligent to reform their lives, should he restore them to health.

glory : or else, give *him* grace, so to take thy visitation, that, after this painful life ended, *he* may dwell with thee in life everlasting ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (5)

## EXPLANATION.

(5) *Hear us, Almighty, &c.*] The sick and their friends may, perhaps, principally ask for present ease, and deliverance from pain ; but since we, when blessed with health, are too apt to forget from whom that blessing comes, sickness and affliction are graciously sent for our correction, and happily, by alarming the conscience, often prove the means of producing repentance, — that true repentance which consists in forsaking sin, in turning to the Lord, and walking in newness of life. For this reason, the prayer contains a supplication that God, of his mercy, would *sanctify his fatherly correction* ; that is, make it tend to their salvation. These sentiments are expressed on many occasions in the Scriptures. St. James says : “ Knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience ; ” and God himself, by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, reproached the Israelites for their wickedness by declaring, “ In vain have I smitten thy children, they received no correction,” chap. ii. 30. Let us, then, remember the assurance, that “ whom the Lord loveth he correcteth.” Prov. chap. iii. 12. Let us also exclaim with Job, chap. v. 17, “ Happy is the man whom God correcteth ; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.”

¶ *Then shall the Minister exhort the sick person after this form, or other like.*

DEARLY beloved, know this, that Almighty God is the Lord of life and death, and of all things to them pertaining, as youth, strength, health, age, weakness, and sickness. Wherefore, whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly, that it is God's visitation. And for what cause soever this sickness is sent unto you ; whether it be to try your patience for the example of others, and that your faith may be found in the day of the Lord laudable, glorious, and honourable, to the increase of glory and endless felicity ; or else it be sent unto you to correct and amend in you whatsoever doth offend the eyes of your heavenly Father ; know you certainly, that if you truly repent you of your sins, and bear your sickness patiently, trusting in God's mercy, for his dear Son Jesus Christ's sake, and render unto him humble thanks for his fatherly visitation, submitting yourself wholly unto his will, it shall turn to your profit,

and help you forward in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life. (6)

*If the Person visited be very sick, then the Curate may end his Exhortation in this place, or else proceed.*

TAKE therefore in good part the chastisement of the Lord: For (as Saint Paul saith in the twelfth chapter to the Hebrews) "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much

#### EXPLANATION.

(6) *Dearly beloved, know this, &c.*] In this exhortation are mentioned two uses of sickness. The first is intended to excite patience, and to give an example to others of pious resignation to the Divine will; the second, to amend those defects in temper and conduct, which are too apt to produce murmurs against the dispensations of Providence.

rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." These words, good *brother*, are written in holy Scripture for our comfort and instruction; that we should patiently, and with thanksgiving, bear our heavenly Father's correction, whensoever by any manner of adversity it shall please his gracious goodness to visit us. And there should be no greater comfort to Christian persons, than to be made like unto Christ, by suffering patiently adversities, troubles, and sicknesses. For he himself went not up to joy; but first he suffered pain; he entered not into his glory before he was crucified. So truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ; and our door to enter into eternal life, is gladly to die with Christ; that we may rise again from death, and dwell with him in everlasting life. Now, therefore, taking your sickness, which is

thus profitable for you, patiently, I exhort you, in the name of God, to remember the profession which you made unto God in your Baptism. And forasmuch as after this life there is an account to be given unto the righteous Judge, by whom all must be judged without respect of persons, I require you to examine yourself and your estate, both toward God and man; so that, accusing and condemning yourself for your own faults, you may find mercy at our heavenly Father's hand for Christ's sake, and not be accused and condemned in that fearful judgment. Therefore I shall rehearse to you the Articles of our Faith; that you may know whether you do believe as a Christian man should, or no. (7)

#### EXPLANATION.

(7) *Take, therefore, in good part, &c.*] Now, trusting that the minds of the sick are calm, composed, and resigned to their fate, the Minister addresses them with an admonition adapted to give due effect to the preceding prayers. He repeats the precept, that their sickness ought to be considered as the visitation of God, and designed to promote their

*Here the Minister shall rehearse the Articles of the Faith, saying thus :*

Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth ?

And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son our Lord ? And that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary ; that he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried ; that he went down into hell, and also did rise again the third day ;

EXPLANATION.

eternal welfare ; he quotes several passages from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, to prove that persons afflicted with pain and sickness are not to consider themselves as deserted by God, but rather as receiving marks of his paternal kindness and affection ; as all afflictions that befall us are designed in love and kindness to us, to make us more religious, and more disposed to detest and forsake sin. We ought, therefore, not only to bear them patiently, but receive them thankfully, accounting them to be mercies, in conformity with the expression of the holy Psalmist, " It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Ps. cxix. 67. ; and again, " Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Psalm cxix. 71.



that he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; and from thence shall come again, at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead?

And dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the remission of sins; the resurrection of the flesh; and everlasting life after death? (8)

EXPLANATION.

(8) *Dost thou believe, &c.*] Having then briefly made this earnest exhortation, and declared that all must give an account, as well of their works as of their faith, before the judgment-seat of Christ, the Minister then recalls to their remembrance the covenant which they, either by themselves or by their sureties, made at their baptism, and solemnly renewed at their confirmation, and rehearses to them the principal articles of the Christian faith. Now, these articles of the Christian faith are contained in the Belief, or what is generally called the Apostles' creed, because it rehearses those articles which were believed and taught by the Apostles themselves; therefore the Minister questions the sick whether they believe in those articles, which are the sign and profession of a member of our Christian Church. If to this faith they add true repentance, they may hope for the forgiveness of their sins.

*The sick Person shall answer,*

All this I stedfastly believe. (9)

*Then shall the Minister examine whether he repent him truly of his sins, and be in charity with all the world; exhorting him to forgive, from the bottom of his heart, all persons that have offended him: and if he hath offended any other, to ask them forgiveness; and where he hath done injury or wrong to any man, that he make amends to the uttermost of his power. (10) And if he hath not before dis-*

#### EXPLANATION.

(9) *All this I stedfastly believe.*] But though a belief in the articles of the Christian Church is necessary to salvation, yet a belief or faith, without sincere repentance, avails nothing. As many persons mistake the nature of true repentance, it is necessary that all Christians should be informed, that it consists, not only in being sorry for those sins which they have committed, but, as our catechism says, in forsaking sin; so that they who affect to repent, and yet continue in habitual sin, mock God Almighty, and cannot expect to receive that pardon which is promised to those who, having, by sincere repentance, effected a change in their minds, turn to God, and amend their lives. The Minister may, therefore, properly require the sick to give proofs of the sincerity of their repentance.

(10) *Then shall the Minister, &c.*] The Minister is then recommended to exhort the sick, in testimony of their sincere repentance, to declare that they are in charity with all the world, and conse-

*posed of his goods, let him then be admonished to make his Will, and to declare his Debts, what he oweth, and what is owing unto him ; for the better*

EXPLANATION.

quently ready to forgive injuries. No duty is, indeed, more earnestly enjoined than that of reconciliation with those who have offended us. To the question of Peter, "How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times?" our Saviour replied, "I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven." Christ also, when suffering under the agony of the cross, prayed for his enemies: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and in the Lord's Prayer we make it the condition on which we supplicate of God, forgiveness of our trespasses, "as we forgive them that trespass against us." This sentiment of forgiveness is, therefore, a leading precept in the Gospel; and none can be considered as true Christians who live in enmity with others, and die with an unforgiving spirit: for, how unpardonable would it be to retain our resentment against those who have offended us, when we are going to account for our own transgressions, and to implore of God forgiveness for the great offences which we have daily committed against him. The Minister then exhorts the sick to ask forgiveness from those whom they have offended, and to make amends to those whom they have wronged; that is, to acknowledge the slander, should they have slandered the reputation of any one, or make amends as much as possible to those whose worldly property they may have injured.

*discharging of his Conscience, and the quietness of his Executors. But men should often be put in remembrance to take order for the settling of their temporal estates whilst they are in health.*

¶ *These words before rehearsed may be said before the Minister begin his Prayer, as he shall see cause.*

¶ *The Minister should not omit earnestly to move such sick persons as are of ability to be liberal to the poor. (11)*

¶ *Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special Confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which Confession, the Priest shall absolve him, (if he humbly and heartily desire it,) after this sort. (12)*

#### EXPLANATION.

(11) *The Minister should not, &c.]* The Minister, after advising the sick to settle their worldly affairs, earnestly exhorts those who are able, to be liberal to the poor; because all Christians are commanded by Jesus Christ to be charitable, without which no one will obtain from Christ a favourable sentence at the day of judgment, and be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. See St. Matthew, chap. xxv. 34—40. As in sickness we are most open to compassion, it is the proper time to appeal to the feelings of those who are able to grant relief to the necessitous; and we are told that they who give to the poor, lend to the Lord: and again, “Blessed be the man that provideth for the sick and needy; the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.” Psalm xli.

(12) *Here shall the sick person, &c.]* We may

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences : And by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.* (13)

## EXPLANATION.

here observe, that our Church does not insist that the sick should be questioned or pressed to confess all their sins, or indeed name specifically any, but at their own choice, and when they have any matter which troubles their consciences, and on which they desire the spiritual advice of the Minister. As, therefore, the consciences of persons, at the near approach of death, are often deeply oppressed by the remembrance of their former iniquities, our Church, on these considerations, recommends to Ministers to offer religious advice to those who choose to confess any of their own accord. It is, however, sometimes the custom of spiritual teachers, who are more zealous than prudent, to aggravate the sufferings of a death-bed, by extorting confessions which the sick are unwilling to make. We should, therefore, bear in remembrance, that God, who has written down their offences, can alone forgive sins, and to him only does particular confession belong ; unless the sick person voluntarily requires spiritual advice and consolation.

(13) *Our Lord Jesus Christ, who, &c.]* The Mi-

¶ *And then the Priest shall say the Collect following.*

Let us pray.

O most merciful God, who, according to the multitude of thy mercies, dost so put

EXPLANATION.

nister, having thus spoken comfort, given spiritual advice to the sick, and prepared their minds for a sincere repentance, proceeds to dispense that comfort: and since their greatest trouble arises from a consciousness of past offences, and a dread of future punishment, he announces the forgiveness of their sins, according to the promises of God made to mankind, through the merits, atonement, and mediation of his blessed Son, and the grace of his Holy Spirit; and we find, that St. James expressly says, that after the elders of the church have prayed over the sick, their faith shall save them; and if they have committed sins, they shall be forgiven. Chap. v. 14, 15. In fact, this power of absolution in all cases is derived from the authority of Christ, committed to the Apostles, and from them regularly descending to their successors in the ministration of his church. Hence, in the form of ordination, the Bishop, in presenting the Bible to those who are ordained Priests, declares, in the words of Christ to his Apostles, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." St. John, chap. xx. 23. It is essential, however, to observe, that this declaration confers on the Priest no absolute power to remit sins, for that prerogative belongs to God alone, but simply a power to

away the sins of those who truly repent, that thou rememberest them no more ; Open thine eye of mercy upon this thy servant, who most earnestly desireth pardon and forgiveness. Renew in *him*, most loving Father, whatsoever hath been decayed by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by *his* own carnal will and frailness ; preserve and continue this sick member in the unity of the Church ; consider *his* contrition, accept *his* tears, assuage *his* pain (14), as shall seem to thee

## EXPLANATION.

announce the pardon and forgiveness of God, through the sacrifice and atonement of Christ, to those who fulfil the conditions on which absolution is granted ; namely, an unfeigned belief in the holy Gospel, and a true repentance of their sins. The nature and extent of this absolution is manifest in the prayer, " Oh ! most merciful God," &c. ; for the Priest then implores the Almighty to ratify this act, by extending his mercy to those suppliants who truly repent ; and of the sincerity of that repentance God only can judge.

(14) — *assuage his pain, &c.*] Pain is undoubtedly a great evil, but is productive of good, whenever it brings offenders to repentance, amends the temper, and purifies the heart ; therefore the prayer

most expedient for *him*. And forasmuch as *he* putteth *his* full trust only in thy mercy, impute not unto *him* *his* former sins, but strengthen *him* with thy blessed Spirit; and, when thou art pleased to take *him* hence, take *him* unto thy favour, through the merits of thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

## EXPLANATION.

after the words "assuage his pain," very properly adds, if it should seem good unto God and expedient for the sick. Finally, the expression "impute not to him his former sins" conveys a supplication that God will not lay to the charge of the penitent sick, those things, which, it is humbly hoped, have, upon sincere repentance, obtained forgiveness on account of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, whom, as St. Paul says, "God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." Romans, iii. 25.

After a psalm, which is calculated to inspire those who are truly penitent, with firmness in their belief, perseverance in their resolutions, and confidence in God's mercy, follows an earnest supplication to the Saviour of the world, to save and help the sick, as well as all others who may be present.

C



*Then shall the Minister say this Psalm.*

*In te, Domine, speravi. Psal. lxxi.*

IN thee, O Lord, have I put my trust ;  
let me never be put to confusion : but  
rid me, and deliver me in thy righteousness ;  
incline thine ear unto me, and  
save me.

Be thou my strong hold, whereunto I  
may alway resort : thou hast promised  
to help me ; for thou art my house of  
defence, and my castle.

Deliver me, O my God, out of the  
hand of the ungodly : out of the hand of  
the unrighteous and cruel man.

For thou, O Lord God, art the thing  
that I long for : thou art my hope, even  
from my youth.

Through thee have I been holden up  
ever since I was born : thou art he that  
took me out of my mother's womb ; my  
praise shall alway be of thee.

I am become as it were a monster unto  
many : but my sure trust is in thee.

O let my mouth be filled with thy

praise : that I may sing of thy glory and honour all the day long.

Cast me not away in the time of age : forsake me not when my strength faileth me.

For mine enemies speak against me ; and they that lay wait for my soul, take their counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him : persecute him, and take him ; for there is none to deliver him.

Go not far from me, O God my God, haste thee to help me.

Let them be confounded and perish, that are against my soul : let them be covered with shame and dishonour, that seek to do me evil.

As for me, I will patiently abide alway : and will praise thee more and more.

My mouth shall daily speak of thy righteousness and salvation : for I know no end thereof.

I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God : and will make mention of thy righteousness only.

Thou, O God, hast taught me from my

youth up until now : therefore will I tell of thy wondrous works.

Forsake me not, O God, in mine old age, when I am gray-headed : until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to all them that are yet for to come.

Thy righteousness, O God, is very high : and great things are they that thou hast done ; O God, who is like unto thee !

Glory be to the Father, &c.

As it was in the beginning, &c.

*Adding this.*

O SAVIOUR of the world, who by thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us ; save us, and help us, we humbly beseech thee, O Lord.

*Then shall the Minister say,*

THE Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in him ; to whom all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, do

bow and obey, be now and evermore thy defence, and make thee know and feel, that there is none other name under heaven given to man, in whom, and through whom, thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (15)

*And after that shall say,*

UNTO God's gracious mercy and protection we commit thee. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make

#### EXPLANATION.

• (15) *The Almighty Lord, who, &c.*] The declaration contained in the final prayer, that there is no other name under heaven given to man, by which he can be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, is taken from the speech of St. Peter to the rulers and elders of Israel. (Acts, iv. 12.) These words prove, that to invoke the Virgin Mary, or any other saint, either for eternal salvation or for relief from bodily disease, is not only useless, but sinful. They also are guilty of equal folly and sin, who look up to any other mediator than our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, who, we are told in Scripture, is the one mediator between God and man, who gave his life a ransom for all, and ever liveth to make intercession for them who come to God by him. (1 Tim. ii. 5. Heb. vii. 25.)

his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace, both now and evermore. *Amen.* (16)

*A Prayer for a Sick Child.*

(17) O ALMIGHTY God, and merciful Father, to whom alone belong the issues

EXPLANATION.

(16) *Unto God's gracious mercy, &c.*] The concluding words of the benediction are taken from Numbers, vi. 24, 25, 26. and implore God to preserve the sick penitents from evil, to regard them with favour and good will, and to be gracious unto them, particularly in the pardon of their sins. And as when the Hebrew Priest pronounced this benediction to the people of Israel, God declared that he would bless the people; so we may be assured that when our Minister pronounces the same benediction to the sick, God will equally bless those, who receive it as they ought, with faith, devotion, and sincere repentance. We now conclude with offering up our prayers, that all sick penitents, in the hour of their departure, may be duly prepared to receive the blessing of Almighty God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the aid of the Holy Spirit, and thus obtain admittance into that heavenly kingdom where pain and sorrow shall be no more, and partake of those joys which God has prepared for his faithful, obedient, and penitent servants.

(17) *O Almighty God, &c.*] As the fondness of

of life and death (18); Look down from heaven, we humbly beseech thee, with the eyes of mercy upon this Child, now lying upon the bed of sickness: Visit *him*, O Lord, with thy salvation; deliver *him* in thy good appointed time from *his* bodily pain, and save *his* soul for thy mercies' sake: That if it shall be thy pleasure to prolong *his* days here on earth, *he* may live to thee, and be an instrument of thy glory, by serving thee faithfully, and doing good in *his* generation; or else receive *him* into those heavenly habi-

## EXPLANATION.

parents for their offspring naturally leads them to use all human means to recover their children from sickness, so the Gospel instructs them to make fervent addresses to their merciful Creator for their restoration to health; and they may reasonably entertain hopes that God will kindly listen to their petitions. But if it should be the will of the Almighty that their children should not recover, the parents must submit to the afflicting loss, with humble resignation to the divine decree.

(18) — *to whom belong the issues, &c.*] These words are taken from Proverbs, iv. 23., and from the Bible translation of the Psalms, lxxviii. 20., and imply, that God alone disposes of life and death.

tations, where the souls of them that sleep in the Lord Jesus enjoy perpetual rest and felicity (19): Grant this, O Lord, for thy mercies' sake, in the same thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

*A Prayer for a sick Person, when there appeareth small hope of recovery.*

(20) O FATHER of mercies, and God of all comfort, our only help in the time of

#### EXPLANATION.

(19) — *the souls of them that sleep, &c.*] The word *sleep* in Scripture is often used for death; so that by the souls of those who sleep in the Lord, is meant the souls of those who died the true and faithful followers of Jesus Christ, in conformity with the expression of St. Paul, who says, "Even so them also, which sleep in Jesus, will God *bring with him.*" 1 Thessal. iv. 14.

(20) *O Father of mercies, &c.*] Considering the many casualties to which the life of man is exposed, the Church has provided a form of prayer for those who, either by lingering disease, or by sudden accident, are brought to such extremities, that they are unable to join in the preceding part of this solemn office. This prayer is offered up by the Priest in

need; We fly unto thee for succour in behalf of this thy servant, here lying under thy hand in great weakness of body. Look graciously upon *him*, O Lord; and the more the outward man decayeth, strengthen *him*, we beseech thee, so much the more continually, with thy grace and Holy Spirit, in the inner man. (21) Give *him* unfeigned repentance (22) for

## EXPLANATION.

behalf of the sick, when they are considered as incapable of making such an appeal themselves.

(21) — *the more the outward man, &c.*] The expressions “the outward man,” which means the body, and “the inner man,” which means the soul, are taken from 2 Cor. iv. 16. : “For which cause (namely, through grace) we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”

(22) *Give him unfeigned repentance, &c.*] Notwithstanding our most earnest endeavours, “we cannot,” as Dean Stanhope justly observes, “sincerely repent, without the assistance of the Divine grace: it is that alone which can strengthen them that stand — it is that alone must raise up them that fall.” God is, therefore, frequently called upon in Scripture, as well as in this and other prayers of our Church, to give us that true and unfeigned repentance, which “shall inspire us with a just abhorrence of our former iniquities, and, above all, with a firm



all the errors of *his* life past, and steadfast faith in thy Son Jesus; that *his* sins may be done away by thy mercy, and *his* pardon sealed in heaven (23), before *he* go hence, and be no more seen. We know, O Lord, that there is no word impossible with thee (24); and that if thou

## EXPLANATION.

resolution to use our utmost diligence to bring honour to virtue and religion, by our future practice." We are also told by St. Paul, that the goodness of God leads to repentance; and we may be convinced that our Almighty Father will not withhold the aid of his Holy Spirit from those who, sincerely and with due humility, pray for it; who are anxious to obey his commands, and to do works meet for (or worthy of) repentance.

(23) — *and his pardon sealed in heaven.*] These words imply an humble request to God, that he would ratify the pardon of the sick penitents; that is, affix his seal or mark, by which, as St. Paul says, "He shall know them to be his." 2 Tim. ii. 19. — These expressions allude to the constant practice among all nations of *sealing* deeds, without which they are not considered valid.

(24) — *there is no word impossible with thee.*] This passage means, that there is nothing (as St. Luke observes) impossible with God. But as God, in his divine wisdom, may not think proper to restore the sick to health, the Minister is instructed

wilt, thou canst even yet raise *him* up, and grant *him* a longer continuance amongst us : Yet forasmuch as in all appearance the time of *his* dissolution draweth near ; so fit and prepare *him*, we beseech thee, against the hour of death, that after *his* departure hence in peace, and in thy favour, *his* soul may be received into thine everlasting kingdom, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thine only Son, our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

*A commendatory Prayer for a sick Person at the point of departure.*

(25) O ALMIGHTY God, with whom do live the spirits of just men made perfect,

#### EXPLANATION.

~~We~~ say that God will give them faith and unfeigned contrition, and that they may be made worthy to enter his everlasting kingdom, through the merits, death, and mediation of Jesus Christ.

(25) *O Almighty God, &c.*] The supplication is followed by this commendatory prayer for sick persons in the hour of death, exhorting God to receive with mercy their departing spirits. “ *The spirits of just men made perfect* ” is an expression employed by St. Paul, Heb. xii. 23, to signify those faithful and penitent followers of Jesus Christ, who have been ren-

after they are delivered from their earthly prisons ; We humbly commend the soul of this thy servant, our dear *brother*, into thy hands, as into the hands of a faithful Creator, and most merciful Saviour ; most humbly beseeching thee, that it may be precious in thy sight. Wash it, we pray thee, in the blood of that immaculate Lamb (26), that was slain to take away the sins of the world ; that whatsoever defilements it may have contracted in

## EXPLANATION.

dered perfect, or cleansed from the defilements of their nature, and made fit to dwell in the presence of God.

(26) *Wash it, we pray thee, in the blood of that immaculate Lamb.*] Christ is here called the immaculate Lamb, because he was without spot or blemish, and consequently without sin. St. John the Baptist, on the first appearance of our Saviour, pointed him out as the *Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world* ; and the same words are adopted by the other sacred writers. St. Peter also says, "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.; and in the Revelation, chap. i. 5, we are told "that *he washed us from our sins in his own blood.*"

the midst of this miserable and naughty world, through the lusts of the flesh, or the wiles of Satan, being purged and done away, it may be presented pure and without spot before thee. And teach us who survive, in this and other like daily spectacles of mortality, to see how frail and uncertain our own condition is; and so to number our days, that we may seriously apply our hearts to that holy and heavenly wisdom, whilst we live here, which may in the end bring us to life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ thine only Son our Lord.  
*Amen.*

*A Prayer for Persons troubled in mind or in conscience.*

(27) O BLESSED Lord, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comforts; We

EXPLANATION.

(27) *O Blessed Lord, the Father, &c.*] We are informed, in almost every page of the Gospel, that God, of his nature and property, is ever ready to have mercy and to forgive; that he sent his son Jesus Christ to become a sacrifice and atonement for the sins of the whole world; and that he has

beseech thee, look down in pity and compassion upon this thy afflicted servant. Thou writest bitter things against *him* (28), and makest *him* to possess *his* former iniquities (29); thy wrath lieth hard upon

## EXPLANATION.

promised the grace of his Holy Spirit to all penitent sinners. Notwithstanding, however, these gracious and positive promises, some persons still impiously call in question the forgiving nature of God; and such a feeling is often entertained by the sick themselves, either from dejection of spirits occasioned by bodily disease, or from erroneous explanations of some difficult passages in the Gospel; or possibly from a deep sense of the enormity of their offences. In such cases, it is the duty of the Minister not to goad the wounded conscience and aggravate the horrors of despair, but to bid the sinner raise his eye to the throne of grace, and to point out the meritorious sacrifice which our gracious Redeemer offered for the sins of all, who repent, and turn to God.

(28) *Thou writest bitter things against him.*] This expression is taken from the words of Job, chap. xiii. 26., who says to God, "*Thou writest bitter things against me.*" To *write*, here means to decree or order; and *bitter things* mean sufferings either of mind or body.

(29) — *and makest him to possess his former iniquities.*] That is, Thou, O God, causest him to suffer great misery from the recollection of his for-

*him*, and *his* soul is full of trouble : But, O merciful God, who hast written thy holy Word for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of thy holy Scriptures, might have hope ; give *him* a right understanding of *himself*, and of thy threats and promises ; that *he* may neither cast away *his* confidence in thee, nor place it any where but in thee. Give *him* strength against all *his* temptations, and heal all *his* distempers. Break not the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. (30) Shut not up thy tender

## EXPLANATION.

mer offences. This is applied to persons who, despairing of their eternal salvation, suffer the keenest agonies of mind from the remembrance of their sins, and dread of the wrath of God, who is too pure to behold iniquity ; yet his very wrath is tempered with mercy, as he intends to purify them by their afflictions, and heal the distemper of their souls.

(30) *Break not the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.*] That is, do not bear hard upon the wounded and contrite heart, but in mercy revive the spirit of him, who is bowed down with the weight of his manifold sins. These words are mentioned by Isaiah, as prophetic of the mild, merciful, and

mercies in displeasure (31): but make *him* to hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Deliver *him* from fear of the enemy, and lift up the light of thy countenance upon *him*, and give *him* peace, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

## EXPLANATION.

benignant character of the future Messiah. The same words are cited by St. Matthew, chap. xii. 20, as being accomplished or fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

(31) *Shut not up thy tender mercies in displeasure.*] This part of the petition is taken from two beautiful verses of the Holy Psalmist, expressive of God's never-failing grace and loving kindness. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and hath he in anger *shut up* his tender mercies?" Psalm lxxvii. 9.: and again — "Make me to hear of joy and gladness, *that the bones* which thou hast broken may rejoice." Ps. li. 8. In adopting these words, the Church justly compares the state of an afflicted soul to a body whose bones are broken, and which, being consequently in extremity of torment, and utterly unable to help and assist itself, must depend entirely upon the kind protection of Almighty God, through the merits and mediation of our blessed Saviour, and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

(1) THE

## COMMUNION OF THE SICK.

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*Forasmuch as all mortal men be subject to many sudden perils, diseases, and sicknesses, and ever uncertain what time they shall depart out of this*

### EXPLANATION.

(1) The Office of the Visitation of the Sick concludes with exhorting all sick persons to receive the Communion. It is an ancient custom of the Christian Church, and doubtless derived from the time of the Apostles, to administer the Holy Communion to persons dangerously sick; and that this comfort may not be wanting to persons in such an extremity, it is permitted to be administered in private houses, to those who are not able to receive it at the church, and the office itself is also shortened and adapted to the weak state of the communicant. As some may doubt whether they are fit to receive the sacrament in such an emergency, from the supposition that they have not time enough to prepare themselves by a self-examination, it is proper to inform them, that those who truly repent of their past sins, who have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ, who have firmly resolved to amend their lives



*life ; therefore, to the intent they may be always in a readiness to die, whensoever it shall please Almighty God to call them, the Curates shall diligently, from time to time (but especially in the time of pestilence, or other infectious sickness), exhort their Parishioners to the often receiving of the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ, when it shall be publicly administered in the Church ; that so doing, they may, in case of sudden visitation, have the less cause to be disquieted for lack of the same. But if the sick be not able to come to the Church, and yet is desirous to receive the Communion in his house, then he must give timely notice to the Curate, signifying also how many there are to communicate with him,*

#### EXPLANATION.

should they be restored to health, and who are in perfect charity with all mankind ; are worthy partakers of the Holy Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ.

Many weighty reasons may be given to prove the necessity and propriety of administering the Holy Sacrament to the sick. First, It is the most solemn act of religion enjoined to all, by Christ himself, as a constant memorial of his body broken and his blood shed for our salvation, and therefore fittest for those whose minds, by sickness, are brought into a sense of their spiritual infirmities. Secondly, It is the divine seal of the remission of sins, where it is received with due faith and sincere penitence. Thirdly, It is a testimony of our union with the Church of Christ, that being thus made members of his body, we may be also partakers of his resurrection.

*(which shall be three, or two at the least;) and having a convenient place in the sick Man's house, with all things necessary so prepared, that the Curate may reverently minister; he shall there celebrate the Holy Communion, beginning with the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, here following.*

*The Collect. (2)*

ALMIGHTY, everliving God, Maker of mankind, who dost correct those whom thou dost love, and chastise every one whom thou dost receive; We beseech thee to have mercy upon this thy servant visited with thine hand; and to grant that *he* may take *his* sickness patiently,

EXPLANATION.

(2) The introductory Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, selected for this occasion, are intended to strengthen the patience and submission of the sick; to inspire them with a true and lively faith in Christ Jesus; produce contrition and repentance for their past transgressions; and convince them that their sickness is a visitation of God designed to promote their eternal welfare, and thence induce them to consider such chastisement and correction as proofs of his paternal love and kindness, rather than as the effects of wrath and indignation; and finally to bring them into a disposition of Christian love and perfect charity with all mankind.

and recover *his* bodily health, if it be thy gracious will: and whensoever *his* soul shall depart from the body, it may be without spot presented unto thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*The Epistle.* Heb. xii. 5.

MY son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

*The Gospel.* John v. 24.

VERILY, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (3)

#### EXPLANATION.

(3) *Verily, verily, I say unto you, &c.]* They who believe in Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer sent from God, and obey his commandments; or, if they break them, sincerely repent and amend their ways, shall escape final condemnation, and pass, as our Saviour says, from life unto death; or in other words, they shall not only escape from that

*After which the Priest shall proceed according to the form before prescribed for the Holy Communion, beginning at these words [Ye that do truly repent, &c.]*

*At the time of the distribution of the Holy Sacrament, the Priest shall first receive the Communion himself, and after minister unto them that are ap-*

#### EXPLANATION.

eternal death or perdition which awaits unbelieving and impenitent sinners, but shall inherit everlasting life, or eternal happiness in the kingdom of heaven. We also find that St. Paul, in the same sense, observes that "the wages of sin is death, but that the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord:" hence the collect for Easter Monday declares "that Almighty God has, through his only-begotten son Jesus Christ, overcome death, and opened unto us the gates of everlasting life;" that is, unto those blessed Christians, who, as St. John says, die in the Lord, and whose works do follow them. Now this doctrine of everlasting life, to use the words of that celebrated divine, the Reverend Dr. Ogden, is the greatest spur to obedience and the practice of virtue; not only out of love and thankfulness to our Divine Benefactor, but out of regard to our own interest. The richer the reward, the more it deserves our assiduous and earnest endeavours. Shall we not press "towards the mark for the prize of our high calling," when we reflect, that in value it exceeds all that eye hath seen, or ear heard, or the heart of man conceived; and hath, besides, this transcendent excellence, that, like the Giver's mercy, it endureth for ever!

*pointed to communicate with the Sick, and last of all to the sick Person.*

*But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, or for want of warning in due time to the Curate, or for lack of company to receive with him, or by any other just impediment, do not receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood; the Curate shall instruct him, that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and stedfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the cross for him, and shed his Blood for his redemption; earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefore; he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth.*

*When the sick Person is visited, and receiveth the Holy Communion all at one time, then the Priest, for more expedition, shall cut off the Form of the Visitation at the Psalm [In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust, &c.] and go straight to the Communion.*

*In the time of the Plague, Sweat, or such other like contagious times of sickness or diseases, when none of the Parish or Neighbours can be gotten to communicate with the Sick in their houses, for fear of the infection; upon special request of the diseased, the Minister may only communicate with him.*

THE END.

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